

REMARKS

Summary of the Office Action

Claims 1, 3 and 4 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Prescott (U.S. Patent No. 4,964,692) (hereinafter "Prescott").

Claims 1, 3 and 5 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hamanaka et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,523,985) (hereinafter "Hamanaka").

Claims 2 and 6, while objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

Summary of the Response to the Office Action

Applicants have amended claims 2 and 6 to be rewritten in independent form by incorporating features of previous claim 1 into each of these claims. Accordingly, claim 1 has thus been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. The dependencies of claims 3-5 have been amended as a result of the amendments to claim 2. Also, new dependent claims 7-9 have been added to recite the features claims 3-5 only being dependent on claim 6 instead of claim 2. Accordingly, claims 2-9 are currently pending for consideration.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102(b) and 103(a)

Claims 1, 3 and 4 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Prescott. Claims 1, 3 and 5 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hamanaka. The Examiner is thanked for the indication that claims 2 and 6, while objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, would be allowable if rewritten in independent

form. Applicants have amended claims 2 and 6 to be rewritten in independent form by incorporating features of previous claim 1 into each of these claims in accordance with the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter in claims 2 and 6. Accordingly, claim 1 has thus been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. The dependencies of claims 3-5 have been amended as a result of the amendments to claim 2. Also, new dependent claims 7-9 have been added to recite the features claims 3-5 only being dependent on claim 6 instead of claim 2.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claims 2 and 6 are now in prima-facie condition for allowance in light of the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter. Dependent claims 3-5 and 7-9 are allowable at least because of their dependence from newly-amended independent claim 2 or 6, and the reasons set forth above. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objections and rejections of record are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants submit that the pending claims 2-9 are in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner feel that there are any issues outstanding after consideration of this response, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned representative to expedite prosecution. A favorable action is awaited.

EXCEPT for issue fees payable under 37 C.F.R. § 1.18, the Commissioner is hereby authorized by this paper to charge any additional fees during the entire pendency of this application including fees due under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 and 1.17 which may be required, including

any required extension of time fees, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-0573.

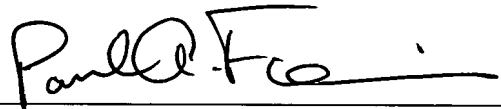
This paragraph is intended to be a **CONSTRUCTIVE PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME** in accordance with 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a)(3).

Respectfully submitted,

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